

Ravalli County Commissioners
Ravalli County, Montana

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United States Forest Service
District Ranger, Darby, Montana

Ravalli County Commissioners

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June 26, 2007

To All Concerned,

I do not believe that any other single area in Ravalli County has the amenities the Lost Horse area has. Lost Horse Creek is big enough to fish in all summer long. Camping spots dot the creek and are easily accessible to any one by car. Lost Horse offers an opportunity for young, old, firm and feeble to experience a drive either up Lost Horse or Como roads or both to look for wildlife and see the sunset or see the sunrise. Lost Horse offers a road into the heart of the mountains the cradle our valley and anyone can get there. High mountain lakes to fish and swim in wait at the end of the road. Outfitters use Lost Horse as their base camp and haul gear and horses from summer to way beyond snowfall. ATV riders take their families and offer their children a place to ride. Huckleberry picking is wonderfully productive all along the road. Lost Horse offers world class rock climbing. Lost Horse offers incredible horse and hiking trails plus a place to off load the horses. The area between Lost Horse and Como is patrolled every hunting season by those who are no longer able to hike long distances in search of the elk or deer that fill their freezers. Snow mobiles, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, snowball fights and sledding parties all happen every winter.

A quarry is not the highest and best use of the Lost Horse area, it already serves it's greatest purpose.

Lost Horse Road is very narrow where it passes in front of my house. This past Saturday, 30 cow elk and their calves crossed the road at 8 am; A bit unusual for summer and not at all unusual for winter and spring. Whitetail deer in groups come and go across the road any time of day all year long. I am at a loss as to what will happen when the gravel truck at 45 miles an hour meets the first herd of elk. It should be quite a slaughter. What will happen when a gravel truck and horse trailer meet on the road or the gravel truck and the motor home. The paved portion of the road is not wide enough and the road is lined with fencing. What will happen on the unpaved portion of the road where someone flies off the road annually already?

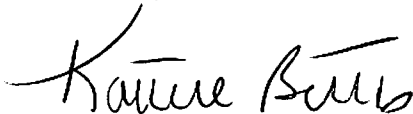
What will happen to the rest of the wild life who share the Lost Horse valley? I can't imagine that it is responsible stewardship to run heavy equipment all winter long during

the times most wildlife is stressed to the utmost. Your gravel trucks will create more ice on the road, more pollution in the area, and even more trucks during the summer to repair the damage done in the winter.

What will happen to the County's existing weed contaminated quarry? It seems less than responsible to simply replace it and leave a weed problem to be reconciled later. We have numerous reminders as residents to be accountable land owners for weed removal on our property. I would think the County has an enormous responsibility to the residents to be the best example of land stewards. It seems unconscionable to replace a quarry with a recreational area as heavily used year around as the Lost Horse area is used.

It is unfathomable that you could contemplate allowing heavy industrial use in a residential - recreational haven when there are a number of other pits in existing industrial areas. It must be the "low cost" aspect of this transaction with the Forest Service that is attractive. The cost is much higher than can be measured in dollars and your decision will affect all the generations that will come after us. Please make the responsible decision to maintain the integrity of the Lost Horse area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathie Butts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathie" and last name "Butts" clearly distinguishable.

Kathie Butts

344 Lost Horse Road
Hamilton, MT 59840